

Message Text

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ACTION EB-11

INFO OCT-01 NEA-11 ISO-00 DOTE-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 INR-10

LAB-06 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 TRSE-00 DODE-00 PA-04

USIA-15 PRS-01 SPC-03 SAM-01 OMB-01 FEA-02 INT-08

CIEP-02 AID-20 DRC-01 /099 W
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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 503

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRN, CE

SUBJ: BUS AND RAIL FARES INCREASED SHARPLY

1. MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT POSTED SHARPLY HIGHER BUS AND RAIL FARES ON ALL ROUTES FEB 4, 1974. BUS FARE INCREASED RANGE FROM 25 PERCENT (RS 0.30 TO RS 0.40) ON SOME SHORT RUNS TO 85 PERCENT (RS 13.05 TO RS 23.90) SQFOR INTERMEDIATE AND LONG DISTANCE JOURNEYS. "ONE-LEG" FARES DOUBLED (RS 0.10 TO RS 0.20). REVISED RAIL FARES REFLECT 40 PERCENT TO 70 PERCENT INCREASES. CEYLON TRANSPORT BOARD (CTB) HAS ANNOUNCED IMMINENT REDUCTION IN NUMBER OF BUS STOP AND REDUCED FREQUENCY OF SERVICES. CTB AND CEYLON GOVT RAILWAY (CGR) EMPLOYEES WILL RECEIVE DISCOUNT FARE PRIVILEGES INPLACE OF FREE TRAVEL HERETOFORE ENJOYED.

2. INCREASE IN FARES FOLLOWS RECENT DOUBLING OF GASOLINE PUMP PRICES. PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES WERE HEAVILY SUBSIDIZED EVEN BEFORE RECENT CRUDE IMPORTS PRICE INCREASE. CTB IN PARTICULAR HAS LONG COMPLAINED OF CONTINUING DETERIORATION OF EQUIPMENT (30 PERCENT OF BUS FLEET INOPERATIVE BECAUSE OF LACK OF PARTS AND TIRES). PUBLIC CRITICISM OF FARE INCREASES HAS BEEN LOUDEST AMONG PRO-GOVT TRADE UNIONS WHO

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NOW CITE HIGHER TRANSPORT COSTS FOR WORKERS AS AADDITIONAL

REASON FOR WAGE INCREASE. ELSEWHERE, MAGNITUDE OF
INCREASES HAS CREATED BELIEF IN SOME QUARTRS THAT GOVT IS
USING PRESENT PETROLEUM CRISIS AS EXCUSE TO REDUCE CTB
AND CGR OPERATING DEFICITS BY RAISING PRICES MORE THAN
WARRANTED BY OIL PRICE CHANGES ALONE.
VAN HOLLEN

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